

What Life Must We Lose?

Sermon Notes for June 25 2017 at Brentwood

Ps 69:6-18 & Matthew 10:28-39



**Those who find their life will lose it,
and those who lose their life for my sake will find it.
(Matt 10:39)**

Provocative Ponderings that Call Forth Our Potential in Christ

- This is a passage about the cost of discipleship, of following Jesus, of being nourished to flourish by the witness and work of Jesus Christ – walking with Jesus as he brings about the Commonwealth of God – an earth and a heaven fully shaped by justice, peace, and joy
- Those hearing this passage in the early church were enmeshed in persecution from without and division and conflict within – and here's Matthew talking about swords, and divided families, and dying for your faith – it may seem stretched and strange to us, especially those of us raised in the relative calm of Canada, but this is still a reality for many Christians around the world – following the Jesus who the authorities executed is not an easy way – there are costs, lives to be lost, changes to be made
- Let's focus this morning on the idea of the sword – it stabs and cuts, penetrating and severing – watched Nate Turner's film, *The Birth of a Nation* (2016), on the plane home on Friday night – about the 48-hr slave rebellion led by preacher Nat Turner in Southhampton, Virginia, in Aug of 1831 – powerful rendering of the indignities of slavery and the visions of Biblical justice that led to the rebellion – knives and axes the initial weapons in the rebellion – a disturbing reminder of the lives of desperation and destruction still lived by many in our world, as well as in Matthew's world – these are swords that destroy life
- But Presbyterians have a particular way of reading the Bible – when we find a word or idea in a passage that is a bit confusing or disturbing, we search other passages in the rich testimony of the Scriptures to provide further insight and wisdom – in Ephesians, Revelation, 2 Timothy, and Hebrews, the sword is the 'word of God' – it is the steadfast love of God, living already within us and among us through the work of the Holy Spirit, that penetrates the human soul to kill our alienation from God and restore us to our rightful relationship with our Creator – this is a sword that restores life as it is meant to be – in relationship with God, others, and the authentic self God created us to be – it is a sword that reconciles us into the fellowship of the friends of Jesus who work with God to bring the Commonwealth of God to full flourishing – we lose lives that are separated from God and are found by God's mercy in which we are nourished to contribute our unique gifts to Christ's mission
- Perhaps a better image than the sword for our day is the laser as used in cancer care – penetrating and cutting out the destructive cells that do not respect their healthy boundaries – restoring an orderly well-being to the body – a healing penetration that restores beneficial collaboration in the body as a whole

Notes for a sermon preached by Brian Fraser,
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At this point in our ponderings, then

I think, among many others things, this is a passage about losing lives that are alienated from God and being found by the mercy of God and restored to the original blessing that God created us to be – each in our precious and unique ways, but also all of us together in the Body of Christ finishing the mission that he started and that Matthew was recording with such powerful images – perhaps it is worth pondering further on how the sword of God’s word is cutting out the despair, or the discouragement, or the depression in your lives – cutting out those things that keep you separated from the merciful and steadfast love of God that is in Christ Jesus, our Lord – I’ll be praying and pondering those discoveries this week – I hope you will join me